

Coke Bottle Glasses by theliteraltrash

Series: [Blind Richie Tozier \[1\]](#)

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Summary:

Richie Tozier is four years old when his family realizes that there is something wrong with his eye sight. He's nineteen when he becomes legally blind. This is a story of self-acceptance.

Coke Bottle Glasses

Author's Note:

Lovely friend wisperwind helped me edit this story!

Richie had never had perfect vision. When reminiscing about the early days of his life, Maggie told him about how he would crash into walls when he first got the hang of crawling and later walking on his own. He would squint when trying to read the storybooks that either she or Wentworth would read to him and Gwen at bed time. Despite being twins, Gwen didn't have the same problems as him. Went said it was due to them being separate embryos.

When the twins were four, Maggie noticed that Richie's left eye was pointed ever so slightly to the right when he would look straight ahead. The lid didn't open as much as his right eye did either, so she took him to their local optometrist. The doctor called it "Amblyopia", but Maggie just called it a lazy eye. Apparently, Richie also had a thing called strabismus, which is poor eye muscle control. That's what made his eye cross. He was given special glasses that would help him see better and help him correct the crossing of his left eye, and atropine eye drops. It didn't really get better, so he had to have surgery when he was five.

His eye was no longer crossed, and he could see equally bad in both eyes. The thick lenses magnified them, showcasing their asymmetry. He could read, and actually excelled at it, but kids made fun of him when he started going to school. It was fine. He could handle it.

Richie takes off his glasses and holds them out for Gwen to take. He rubs his temples to try to alleviate the headache that is already beginning to form. Maggie gives him a pat on the back. "You're doing fine, sweetie. We'll get you some ice cream with extra sprinkles on the way home as long as you don't tell your father," she says. Richie

can hear the smile in her voice, even if all he can see of her is the blur of her skin and her dark hair. Gwen laughs and Maggie shushes her as the door opens.

Richie squints at the harsh light coming in from the door. "Hello, Richard," Dr. Martin, the optometrist Richie has been seeing for ten years, says. "Ready for the routine exam?"

Richie nods. "As much as always, I guess."

"Are there any updates I should know about?" The doctor asks. Richie can hear him sit in the rolling chair at the desk beside the exam chair.

Maggie clears her throat and nudges Richie's arm. Richie grimaces and shoves her away. The blur of her body moves to sit next to the blur of Gwen. "My left eye has been twitching a lot lately," Richie says. He squints in the direction of Dr. Martin. "And when I close my right eye, I can't see even with my glasses on."

"When does the twitching happen? Is it random or is there a trigger?"

"It started to happen when I got upset, but now it happens at a random time everyday. Sometimes multiple times a day."

"When the twitching happens what does it look like?"

Gwen speaks up. "The eyeball shakes back and forth and his lids sorta flutter but don't close all the way."

Dr. Martin has Richie standing up, and Maggie guides him to the spot in front of the chart. "Can you close your right eye and read the top row of letters for me?"

Richie closes his right eye and stares at the blur in front of him. "Uhh.... I don't know what it says."

"That's okay," Dr. Martin assures. "Open your right eye and close your left." Richie does as instructed. The blurriness eases. "Read the top row of letters."

"It's just an E."

"The second row?"

Richie takes a deep breath. "F and P."

"Very good," Dr. Martin says. "Can you read the third row?"

"No," Richie feels his eyes begin to water. The tension in his face builds the longer he tries to read it.

He can feel the upper lid of his left eye start to move rapidly as he opens it. "That's okay," Dr. Martin says. "Can you have a seat?"

Richie nods, and Maggie helps him sit down. Tears fall down his face, and his left eye doesn't stop moving. The shape of Dr. Martin moves, and Richie hears things being shifted. "Richie, are you alright, darling?" Maggie asks.

"Yeah, mom," Richie wipes his face.

"I'm going to dilate your pupils so I can have a look inside your eye, if that's alright."

Dr. Martin always asks Richie if it's alright when he's already crying. It doesn't happen often, but he still asks. His least favorite part of a visit is the dilation. Everything gets brighter and fuzzier. Richie is always given a pair of sunglasses to wear when he leaves, but they're never enough. He gets migraines and has to lock himself in his bedroom until it's over.

He tells Dr. Martin that it's alright anyways.

They do it, and a bright light is shined directly in Richie's eyes. He cries some more, and then calls himself a pussy for crying at the eye doctor when he's already fourteen years old.

Gwen gives Richie his glasses back and Dr. Martin has that serious expression on his face that he always has. "I'm going to up his

prescription on both lenses, but the prescription for his left eye will be stronger than that of his right. As for the twitching, it's likely due to a sensitivity to light in his left eye. Both eyes seem to be sensitive to light, so he'll need tinted lenses to ease his discomfort and stop the twitching before his eyelid droops more than it already does."

Two weeks later, Richie is sitting by himself in the clubhouse. Well, he was until Bev showed up. His new glasses are massive. The lenses are thick and pink, and he hates them.

"Woah," Bev says once she turns and sees him lying in the hammock.

Richie frowns at her and crosses his arms over his chest. "I'm gonna kill myself if I have to think another white shirt is pink."

She laughs and takes a pack of cigarettes out of her pocket. "Want one?" She asks as she takes one out and places it between her teeth. Richie holds a hand out and she gives him one. He sits up and puts the cigarette in his mouth, watching as she lights hers. He leans toward her and she uses the flame to light his. "What's up with the glasses? Did the doc say you need to see the world through rose tinted glasses?"

"Basically," Richie exhales the smoke, making sure it gets in her face. "He said I'm sensitive to light, and the color would help. I don't think it should matter if I'm sensitive to light, considering Mrs. K and I only have our affair in complete darkness."

Bev rolls her eyes and climbs into the hammock with him. Richie curls in on himself a bit in order to give her room. He's used to Eddie

being the one to climb in with him, and he doesn't seem to need or want the space that Richie gives Bev. "Are you okay, though?" Bev looks at him the same way Gwen looked at him after their parents went to bed the night of his appointment. The look of sympathy that wasn't pitying, just concerned.

Richie nods. "Yeah, I'm fine," he says. Y'know, like a liar.

That night, Eddie sneaks into Richie's room through the window.

Richie is reading a copy of *Meatmen Volume 1* that has the front and back covers of an old Spider-Man comic glued over the covers, his nose almost touching the pages, when Eddie raps his knuckles on the window. He slams the comic shut and throws it on his nightstand. He looks at Eddie with wide eyes and gets up.

"What the fuck is up with your glasses?" Eddie asks as he crawls in through the window. He's not speaking in the same hushed tone they have to use when Richie sneaks into Eddie's house at night.

"Your mom gave them to me as a late Valentine's Day gift," Richie closes the window while Eddie adjusts his clothes to get more comfortable.

Eddie glares at him and Richie smiles. "Can we not talk about my mom?"

The smile on Richie's face falls and he nods stiffly. "The doctor said

the tint would help me," he says.

Eddie looks in Richie's eyes, and Richie feels like the walls are closing in. There has always been a softness about Eddie which people often mischaracterize as weakness. That softness shows that he cares, and that he's protective of those he loves. Eddie is looking at him with that softness in that moment, and Richie wants nothing more than to kiss him. He doesn't. Instead, Eddie grabs Richie's hand and holds it. "I think they look nice. Pink and blue are pretty together."

Richie's face heats up and his eye begins to spasm. He pushes his glasses up the bridge of his nose as Eddie furrows his brows. "Thanks," he says, closing his eyes in an attempt to stop the twitching.

Eddie's hands move to Richie's shoulders, and there is a moment of absolutely nothing except Richie feeling the lid of his left eye move out of his control. Richie stops breathing when he feels a pair of lips touch his own. He's frozen, and he opens his eyes just in time to see Eddie pull back.

Eddie lets go of him and takes a step back. His eyes are wide, and he's gaping like a fish. He looks like he made a grave mistake. "God, I'm sorry. That was fucked up. I shouldn't have done that."

Richie grabs him and surges forward. Their mouths slam together, and Richie is sure his lip catches on his tooth. He can taste his own blood. Eddie touches him again, and Richie feels like he's going to melt. It's nothing like the men in the *Meatmen* comic. Richie thinks the kiss is like something out of a John Hughes movie. His hands are framing Eddie's face as he holds him in place. Eddie has his hands on Richie's hips. It's nice. Well, as nice as a first kiss can be when you

have a giant pair of glasses between the two of you, and you bite the inside of your mouth.

They kiss a lot after that. Any time they're alone, they have their hands on each other. They don't tell anyone for the first few months. It isn't until they're 15 that they tell the rest of the Losers. Richie tells his family a week after that.

Wentworth says he's glad Richie won't be getting anyone pregnant, and Maggie elbows him in the ribs. She turns to Richie with a smile on her face and says she's glad he felt comfortable coming out to them. Gwen says that Eddie has bad taste in guys.

Things are better than they have been in a long time.

Then, Richie goes to the optometrist again. Another eye exam with Dr. Martin. Richie has been having distortion in his vision. He sees things better when they're in his peripheral vision, rather than when he's looking directly at them. Dr. Martin doesn't have an obvious reaction to this information. He asks Richie if he can dilate his pupils to look in his eyes. So they do.

"Your macula is really thin," Dr. Martin says. "Especially in your left eye."

"What does that mean?" Maggie asks. "Is that a good thing?"

Dr. Martin stands and writes something on his clipboard. "The macula

is responsible for making the central vision clear. When the macula becomes thin, like Richie's, we're looking at a case of macular degeneration. Considering he's only 16, it's an early onset case."

Richie digs his nails into his wrist and closes his eyes. "Can you say it like I'm stupid?" He asks, hoping that he's misunderstanding what the doctor is saying.

"Macular degeneration typically affects patients over 50 years of age," Dr. Martin states. "It's the reason a lot of the elderly go blind."

Silence falls across the room and Richie inhales sharply. He knows, in that moment, that his eyesight won't get better. No matter how much they've tried over the last 12 years, his vision will just get worse and worse. "So, I'm going blind?"

"Yes," Dr. Martin states clearly. "You're already legally blind in your left eye," he adds. "It's only a matter of time until you are in the right eye as well."

His glasses do make it easier to see. The tint keeps light from stressing his eyes too much, and the prescription eases the blurriness enough. Richie is sixteen years old, and all his friends drive, but he can't even take the test in order to get his partner's permit.

Later, he's laying in his bed with his head in Eddie's lap. The door is open, and Richie isn't wearing his glasses. Eddie runs his fingers through Richie's hair. He can hear the turning of a glossy page, but he doesn't know if it's a magazine or a comic. "What would you do if I had laser eyes?" He asks.

"I'd ask you to use your lasers to make me toast," Eddie says dryly.

Richie smiles and grabs the hand in his hair. He kisses Eddie's palm and exhales slowly. This is something he wants to remember. The lines in Eddie's palms are prominent, and he's started to gain calluses from learning how to take care of his car. Richie has always liked the way Eddie's hands look. His nails are well taken care of if you exclude the dirt and grease embedded under them. Eddie doesn't have Stan's habit of biting his nails. He always yammered about how you could get diseases from that. Richie never corrected him that he actually read about how biting your nails helps build your immune system by allowing your body to fight off common bacteria. At least, he thinks that's what the thing he read meant.

They're seventeen, close to turning eighteen and graduating. "What are you planning on doing for college?" Mike asks as he and Richie sit outside in the Tozier backyard. The other Losers are shopping for the supplies needed to sleep in tents there.

"I'm not going to college," Richie states. They all know about his condition, but they don't treat him any different than they did before. They lovingly tease him for how stupid he looks in his massive glasses, and they laugh when he fumbles because he can't see something properly. "Me and Eddie are going to New York. He's gonna go to college to get more knowledge, and I'm gonna sell my body to men that pity a blind whore."

"Eddie and I," Mike says after a moment of silence.

Richie laughs. "Fuck off!"

Mike smiles sadly. "I don't think I'm going to college either."

"Why not?" Richie furrows his brows. Mike Hanlon is definitely the smartest person he knows. If anyone is going to escape Derry by going to some amazing college in another state, it's him.

"The farm," Mike states simply. "My grandfather is planning on giving it to me when I turn 18 so that he can retire."

"Mikey, I'm gonna get really serious for a second," Richie sits up and leans closer to him. He wants to get a good look at Mike when he says what he's about to say. "You don't owe that man shit. Yeah, he took you in when your parents were killed, but that's because you're his *grandson*. He loves you, even if he sucks at showing it because he's stressed about the life you guys live. Do not waste your life in this shitty fucking town out of some nonexistent obligation. Go to college, become a historian and a vegan. Be happy."

"Rich, I can't just abandon him," Mike looks at the ground beneath them. "He's the only family I've got left."

Looking at the sad expression on Mike's face, Richie realizes that he knows he can and should leave Derry as soon as possible, but he feels guilty. There's nothing Richie can do to alleviate that guilt, just like there's nothing anyone can do to alleviate the guilt Bill feels about not being there to stop Henry Bowers from murdering Georgie when he was 12. It's the guilt that Richie's parents feel when they're confronted with the fact that there's nothing they can do to stop him from going blind.

If there's one thing Richie Tozier has learned in his life, it's that people feel guilty about things out of their control no matter what logic you throw at them. He still feels guilty about being gay all the time. Gwen feels guilty that she got mom's 20/20 vision, while Richie got stuck with dad's need for glasses, and Went's dad's early onset macular degeneration. Though Richie's grandfather went blind when he was 40, Richie knows he will be going blind some time in his 20s.

While the other Losers are applying to colleges, Richie is learning to read Braille. It's difficult and frustrating. He thinks he'd be fine never reading again instead of having to struggle through the lessons any more than he already has. His brain doesn't process that he's trying to read something with his fingers. Instead, his brain just picks up that he's touching something with a weird texture of a bunch of dots. At one point he just got up and screamed.

He's fine. Really. Everything is fine.

Except, it's night and Richie is in a tent with Eddie, Stan, and Bev. He only knows for sure that it's them because they keep talking and laughing. He's wearing his glasses, in hopes that he'd be able to see them.

Richie is sitting between Eddie's legs, and they're holding hands. He can feel him. The weight of Eddie on his back is comforting, and he likes the pressure of Eddie's thighs against his sides. But he can't see him. He's looking down at their joined hands and he can't see them either. It's just a blur of dark gray.

"Richie, are you okay?" Stan's voice is closer.

Richie realizes he's crying as he points his face in the direction of his best friend. He wants to say yes. He wants to say he's fine. If he could make a joke, he would. But nothing is coming out. Instead, he squeezes Eddie's hand and shakes his head. He lets out a sob and Eddie holds him.

"I've got you," Eddie whispers in his ear.

"I can't see," Richie finally says. "It's too dark, I can't see anything."

Someone opens the tent, and Richie is being helped up by six hands. He hears the other tent opening as he lets out another loud sob and tries to see anything other than dull light in the darkness. He nearly trips getting on the back porch.

"What's happening?" Mike asks.

"I-is he oh-oh-oak-okay?" Bill stutters as he catches up to them.

Strong hands grab him by the waist and lift him up. The six hands that were helping him walk are gone. He's being carried by someone taller and stronger than him into his house. "You're okay, Rich," Mike's voice is quiet against his ear. "I'm taking you to the kitchen, and I'm gonna get your mom."

Richie wraps his arms around Mike's neck and buries his face in his

chest. He's sat in a chair, and someone turns the overhead light on. It's better. He blinks, allowing his eyes to get used to the light, and he adjusts his glasses as he takes a few deep breaths. "Thank you," he says as he holds onto Mike's bicep.

Mike smiles at him, then goes away. The other Losers are gathered in the kitchen, and Eddie is panting heavily. Ben says that it's okay, and Eddie shoves him away. Bill puts a hand on Eddie's shoulder, and his other on Ben's.

Richie has calmed down by the time he hears three pairs of footsteps heading towards them. Maggie is leading the charge, a sleepy Wentworth is walking beside Mike. "Richie, honey, what happened?" Maggie asks.

"It got dark and I couldn't see," Richie states. "It's like in the movies when someone walks into a dark room and the screen is just black and since you're in the theater you can't see anyone around you because it's so dark that there's nothing to see."

Wentworth squints and frowns. "I have no idea what the hell you're talking about."

"We'll tell Dr. Martin about it at your next appointment." Maggie ignores Wentworth and puts a gentle hand on Richie's back. "For now, you're gonna sleep in your room tonight."

They moved to New York after high school. Eddie got accepted into NYU, and Richie knew that there was a good comedy scene there, and he wanted in on it. First, he transferred all his records to an optometrist in the city, and made an appointment.

It goes about as well as Richie expects. His vision in his left eye is even worse than it was at his last visit with Dr. Martin, and his right eye is now at 20/200, which means he is officially legally blind without glasses.

Eddie had been there in the room when the doctor told Richie. Now, he's sitting at the kitchen table in their apartment, talking on the phone with Gwen.

"He just sort of... rolled with it," Eddie says as he wraps his finger around the cord. "It was like he stopped caring. When we found out he was night blind when we were 17, he was terrified. Now he just said *okay* as if he's totally fine with being blind."

She sighs. "Either he was lying, or he actually has accepted it by now."

Eddie rolls his eyes and tells her she's being unhelpful. She calls him a prick and hangs up. Eddie and Gwen have never been close, he just called the Tozier house and she happened to be the one to pick up. He had wanted to talk to Maggie, because she is more of a mother to him than his own mother. All the other Losers agree that Richie has the best parents, and that they love Maggie and Wentworth with a burning passion.

Instead of calling again and asking for Maggie, Eddie pinches the bridge of his nose and thinks about a lot of things. He has his classes starting in two weeks, and he needs to find an accommodating job. Richie and Eddie had agreed not to rely on the Toziers for money, and only accept help if it was needed. As of that day, the apartment

was being paid for with money Wentworth sent directly into Richie's bank account. Eddie's school was being paid for with money his father left him when he died.

The new optometrist said that Richie should apply for disability aids in order to help with certain accommodation needs and money issues. As soon as they got home, Richie took his glasses off and layed in bed with the blanket covering his face. He said he had a headache and just wanted to sleep it off. Eddie knows this is how Richie normally gets after an appointment, but he's worried.

They do some reading on social security disability benefits, and agree that it would be helpful. At the library, the librarian stares at Richie when he and Eddie ask for any information the library may have. She's focusing on his eyes, how they move without his control. It makes Eddie think of school in Derry and how the only people to treat Richie like a normal human person were the Tozier's and the Losers. Everyone else would watch the effects of what Eddie learned is called nystagmus in disgust.

They apply for the benefits, and Wentworth starts putting the rent money in Eddie's bank account instead of Richie's. It's going to take a while for them to hear back from the government, but they're willing to wait.

Richie is writing material to use at comedy clubs when there's a knock at the door. Eddie tells him he's got it, and gets up. He answers the door and freezes at the sight of his mother.

"Eddie-bear, why haven't you called me?" Sonia asks as she pushes her way inside the apartment.

Eddie takes a deep breath. "I've been busy, ma. What are you doing here?"

She turns to him and puts her hands on his face. He's taller than her now, at 18 years old, but he still feels so small under her beady eyes. "I was worried. New York is a dirty place. You know how delicate you are, and about Danny and how he got AIDs in '87. Danny's dead, Eddie. I can't let that happen to you."

Eddie grabs her hands and pulls them off of his face, keeping hold of her wrists. He can see Richie's head turned so that they're in his periphery. "Mommy, I'm fine. Richie and I have just been going to his eye doctor and trying to figure some stuff out for him."

Sonia tsks and glares in Richie's direction. "Why do you insist on hanging around him? You know what they say about him in Derry."

"I love him," Eddie states firmly. "The people in Derry all have their heads shoved so far up their asses that they can't see a good thing staring them in the face."

She gasps and takes a step back. "I will not have you speak to me like this. Come home," she puts her hands over her heart. "You worry me so much," Eddie can hear the telltale hitch in her voice. "I don't want anything bad happening to you."

"Nothing bad is happening to me," Eddie looks at Richie again. It's grounding to see someone that knows how strong he is. "I'm not sick,

and I'm not going to get sick."

Sonia moves closer to him, and Eddie stands his ground. She gently grabs his forearms in that way that he used to think was protective. Maggie helped him realize it was controlling. "He's a queer," she whispers. "He's sick, and you can see it on him. I tried to save you, but Margaret said his eyesight is getting worse. God is doing this to him, and you're not letting me help you from suffering the same fate."

"Get out of my apartment, ma."

"Eddie-"

"Sonia."

She looks at him with wide eyes and doesn't move. "Eddie, please."

Eddie closes his eyes and thinks about Bill. He's always been so strong. He led the charge against Bowers in '89, and he's the one who always knew what to do when something was going wrong. Eddie has to be strong and brave like Bill. He can do this. "I'm gay, and I love Richie. There is nothing you or- or God can do about it."

She lets go of him. "He's corrupting you."

"Get out of my apartment, Sonia," Eddie opens his eyes and looks into hers.

She grimaces and leaves, saying "you know where to find me when you realize I can help you."

Richie holds Eddie when they lay in bed that night. Normally, Eddie holds Richie because he likes to feel protected, but that night Eddie needs the comfort of Richie's larger body wrapped around him.

Eddie isn't used to seeing Richie without glasses. Even when he watches Richie sleep, it's weird to see him with a bare face. His glasses magnify his eyes, and they're still tinted. Without his glasses, Richie's eyes are smaller and his face is less expressive. Eddie knows that Richie has never been very open with his emotions, aside from when he's in extreme distress.

Since he had been told that he is now officially legally blind in both eyes, Richie wears his glasses less often. When Eddie asks why this is, he says it's because he gets headaches when he wears them. "Maybe you should get a guide dog to help you around the city when I'm at school," Eddie says one evening when they're walking home after dinner.

Richie isn't wearing his glasses because the sun sets early in the winter time, and Richie can't see at night even with his glasses. Their arms are linked, they're wearing gloves and thick coats, and Richie is using his new cane. "Is this your way of saying you're into puppy play?" Richie smiles.

Eddie bumps into Richie, which causes him to laugh. That's what he's started doing instead of rolling his eyes. He gives him a physical response that's as playful as his eyerolls. "I just think it could be

beneficial," Eddie states. "We still haven't heard back from the social security people, and I can't be your guide all the time."

Richie's smile falls and he sighs. "This is when you list statistics and facts that may or may not be true because you have to focus on numbers when you read about things."

"I'm being serious, Rich."

"I don't wanna deal with training a goddamn dog, Eds."

"You have to do something! You can't get a job, and trying to write makes you cry, and you just crawl into bed when you cry."

Richie stops in his tracks, and Eddie moves in front of him. He places his hands on Eddie's biceps. "You're worried about me, I get it. You want to focus on helping me because you think that I'll give you a pass about how I hear you wash your hands every 20 minutes when you're home."

"It's flu season!"

"I'll get a guide dog if you go to therapy."

Eddie clenches his jaw and looks in Richie's eyes. Richie is looking at him, but he can't see him and Eddie knows this. Still, making eye contact with Richie's shaking eyes gives him a comfort that he so

rarely gets. "Fine," he says.

Richie smiles and kisses him. "Let's go home. My dick is freezing off."

Richie's head is throbbing as he attempts to read the response from the social security office. Jessica, an adult German shepherd, is sitting on the floor beside him without her harness on. Eddie should be on his way home from class, so Richie won't be alone with Jessica for much longer. He takes his glasses off and looks in the direction of the blur of her brown and black fur. "Can you read this to me?" He asks her.

She lays down, but doesn't make a sound. Richie sighs and rubs his forehead. He wants to go out and get a sandwich from the nearby bodega, but the snow reflects light in a way that shines directly in his eyes. So, he's staying home.

It had taken a month for Richie to get the proper training to have and use a guide dog, and it's been four months since they applied for disability benefits. Eddie has a part time job as a taxi driver, and Richie has a ten minute set that he performs at open mic nights at comedy clubs. He gets a decent amount of laughs, and people in the comedy scene are talking about him, but he's not making any money.

There's a knock at the door, and Richie makes his way over to answer it. By now, he has the layout of the apartment memorized and he can move around perfectly fine as long as nothing gets moved drastically. He opens the door and says "my my... you look just like my grandson," in the Voice of an elderly woman.

"Shut the fuck up," his sister greets. Gwen had stayed in Derry with

their parents, saying she was taking a gap year. However, Richie knows she didn't get accepted to her dream college and decided not to pursue higher education at all. "You gonna let me in, or am I gonna sleep in the hallway tonight?"

Richie makes a contemplative face. "I don't know if witches are allowed in the apartment."

Gwen pushes her way past him and enters the apartment. Richie can hear her heavy boots moving across the floor, and the chains on her skirt rustling with her movement. She had always been more keen on the fashion of rock and roll, while Richie preferred the music. He remembers people in Derry asking his parents if Gwen worships the devil. Went would always stare blankly at the person in silence until they walked away in fear. Maggie would say yes, that it runs in the family, and then she'd roll her eyes.

Richie closes the apartment door and makes his way back to the table. He sees Gwen's silhouette crouch down to pet Jessica, and he sits in the seat he occupied before she got there. "Gwen, you know I love you, right?"

Gwen sighs. "What do you want me to do?"

"Read this for me and tell me what it says," Richie holds the paper out to her and smiles.

She takes it and sits in another seat. "Richard Tozier, you are entitled to monthly disability benefits beginning January 1995."

"Thank fucking god," Richie interrupts her, leaning back in his seat. He feels his eyes begin to water and his face heat up. Gwen grabs one of his hands and the other goes to his forehead.

He can feel her rubbing his knuckles as tears stream down his face. "You're getting \$2,564.17 a month, and you have to spend all of it so that you don't get more than \$3,000 in your account at a time or your benefits will be revoked."

That is just about the stupidest thing Richie has ever heard, aside from when Ben said that Bev wouldn't like him because of his weight. Still, it's out of his control, and at this point he's taking what he can get. He hasn't been making any money at all, and Eddie makes barely enough to get by. For now, it's enough.

Richie lets himself cry tears of relief on his sister's shoulder. It reminds him of when they were twelve and she would let him cry in her arms after Henry Bowers called him a four eyed faggot. Those were tears of devastation, but in this moment Richie is letting out all the pent up emotion that he felt for the last four months. That period of waiting was excruciating.

For Christmas, the Losers are reuniting, and Gwen is tagging along. She lost contact with her two friends, and hasn't made any new ones because she hasn't left Derry.

Richie, Gwen, and Eddie agree to wait at the airport for the rest of the Losers. Bill arranged a trip from California to Chicago so he could pick up Ben and Bev from their New Couple apartment, and then the three of them drove to Georgia to pick up Stan and his new girlfriend

Patricia, then last but not least, they would drive to Florida to get Mike. After they were all together, they flew in to New York.

At the airport, Richie has Jessica and a pair of dark sunglasses. The winter weather lead to more snow and ice, which bothers his sensitivity to light. Plus, the sunglasses being dark keeps strangers from staring at his eyes. He knows it happens, Eddie complains about it when they're alone. He had contemplated putting his glasses on that morning, and he even wore them for a couple of seconds. Looking in his reflection, he had his usual vertigo, but everything was hazier than usual. It used to be that the nystagmus would be his only issue with his glasses during the day. When he noticed that the world was still blurry, he took his glasses off and tried not to cry.

He plasters on a smile as he listens to Gwen and Eddie talk. Jessica guides him through the crowd, her harness not stopping people from asking if they can pet her. Eddie always snaps at them, and it makes Richie want the ground to swallow him whole.

"Bleib," Richie says after Eddie tells Gwen that they're where he told Bill they'd be waiting. Jessica stops and stands beside him. Richie tightens his grip on the handle of her harness, attempting to ease his anxiety.

A familiar weight touches his arm, and Eddie speaks. "You alright, Rich?"

"It's busy here," is all Richie says.

"Can I pet your dog?" A random woman asks.

Gwen groans loudly. "She's a service dog," she says pointedly.

"Sorry, I didn't know."

Richie takes a deep breath as Eddie squeezes his arm. "You're fine."

So, they wait. Richie isn't sure if they have a sign for the Losers to see, but it takes a while for the 6 guests to meet them. He hears the familiar sound of Bev squealing. "Oh my god, you got a dog," she shouts, now closer.

Richie smiles and hugs her. "She's working, don't distract her."

He imagines that Bev pouts as she pulls away. Her hand is on the back of his neck, and he swears he can feel a ring. "Fine," she says before taking her hands off of him and moving on to greeting Eddie.

Richie hugs the rest of the Losers, and extends his hand for Patricia to shake. "It's so nice to meet you," she says. "Stan has told me so much about all of you. At first, I thought he was joking but during our little road trip I realized he wasn't."

"Wait until Richie gets talking," Mike says. "I'm sure he'll exceed any expectations Stan has set."

It's so great having all the Losers back together. They talk just like they used to, and Patty fits right in. Richie does a set at a club while they're in town, and they're the loudest members of the audience. Jessica is sitting beside the stage waiting for him to come back, and he's having the time of his life.

"Thank you all for coming out here tonight. I'm grateful to you all for watching me make a fool of myself," he smiles at the laughter. "I don't know if we have any newcomers, people that just stumbled in here and have no idea who I am, but I'm legally blind. I literally only know for sure that there are 9 audience members, all of whom I brought with me. One of them is my guide dog, so I've got that going for me."

At the end of his set, he gets the loudest round of applause he has ever gotten. He turns in the direction where he left Jessica when he let go of her harness and says *hier* . She trots over to him with her loud feet on the stage. Richie grabs her harness and waves to the crowd as he thanks them and wishes them a good night.

When he gets pulled in to a group hug, he's held by the people he holds nearest to his heart. He's okay. He's good.

He means it.

Author's Note:

I am not legally blind, but I am nearsighted and due to this I experience night blindness. My younger sister had strabismus that was corrected with surgery, so she now has this purple-ish scar on the side of her eyeball, so just imagine Richie also has that. The dog commands are in German because it is less likely for Jessica to hear German than for her to

hear English.